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Origin News



The newsletter for Origin Housing stakeholders

April 2011

Watford development is "best till last"



Innovation, community and partnership are why the 164 intermediate homes 'wrapped' around the south stand of Watford football club make effective affordable housing. So said the retiring head of the Housing & Communities Agency Sir Bob Kerslake, when he opened the scheme late last year.

Sir Bob said he had left the "best till last" by visiting the scheme, because it typified good development. There had been close collaboration with nearby Watford General Hospital, Watford council, the local allotments society, schools and the wider community. On-site, Origin worked hand-in-hand with main contractor Kier and

Watford FC to ensure the building site could be converted into a major sporting arena. For instance, the flow of over 270,000 fans in and out of the ground had to be diverted over 90 times through the building period.

Resident and centre back for Watford Ladies FC, Cori Daniels (above) said: "This apartment ticked all the boxes, and it was a real bonus that it was brand new. I just couldn't resist the opportunity to live in a development that is literally wrapped around the Vicarage Road stadium! I'm pretty close to town too."

The Stephen Marshall designed stadium has just won the Best Architectural Design category of the **First Time Buyer awards** for its dramatic hilltop look.

Read more and view pictures here, or go to www.originhousing.org.uk/latest-news.aspx

Toddler on the roof



Kentish Town kids are enjoying new child-friendly rubber flooring fitted to replace concrete at a rooftop nursery. The original job was to make-good the existing slabs, but Origin's Property Services team took the opportunity to make the area more suitable for the pupils.

One of the nursery teachers said: "It looks amazing, the children enjoy playing on it and the parents think it is safe."

Current £145m pipeline of developments underway

Apart from the 164 homes at Watford stadium, recently finished are:

Winchester Rd, Camden, completed June 10



The 25 social housing apartments including two 8 person homes, are light and airy and surprisingly quiet considering they are so near busy Swiss Cottage. A ground source heat pump draws up warm air in the winter with the reverse in the summer.

Waverley Rd, Enfield, completed Jan 11



These 12 apartments are in an established residential area, near lots of parkland. The development is a four-storey block with communal gardens and parking, for general needs social housing tenants.

Crabtree Place and Crabtree House, Whitfield St, Camden, completed February 11

This 11 home mixed social housing and private sale development has concrete frame construction with brick-effect cladding. Its in the epicentre of London, very near Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road, with a walled courtyard for the private sale and shared ownership homes. Crabtree Park is only 50 yards away.

Read more here

Unison building, Camden, completed April 11



17 social housing and shared ownership homes are part of a one acre redevelopment of the old Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital site. Most of the site is occupied by the new offices for trade union UNISON, with some private and commercial property included as well. The development includes the listed existing fabric of the old hospital elevation, with a huge atrium straddling the main section.

Read more here, or go to www.originhousing.org.uk/latest-news.aspx

Caring staff get high customer service marks



Origin staff treat customers with respect and are friendly and polite said 100% of Care & Support customers in a recent survey. Nineteen of our 23 Care & Support schemes and services in London and Hertfordshire got these 100% scores, with only five schemes and services falling below a 90% response rate in the same category.

The 521 customers – a 73% response rate – also scored the services highly for: the fairness and equality of the service; if staff turn up on time; if meetings are regular; how support plans meet needs; how support is received overall; how housing management is overall.

A respondent said her support worker: “was very polite and courteous, and went out of his way to support me and even arranged for me to claim Disability Living Allowance.”

Read more here, or go to www.originhousing.org.uk/latest-news.aspx

All homes meet the Decent Homes standard



Origin's 5,500 homes now meet the government's Decent Homes standard after more than 11 years of repairs and maintenance.

All our homes meet a minimum level of comfort, have reasonably modern facilities and are weather-tight after the installation of more efficient heating systems, new kitchens and bathrooms, roofs, electrics, insulation etc.

Head of Asset Management Tim Hayton said: "It's a great

achievement for us, but the hard work needs to continue if we're to maintain our Decent Homes level and improve resident satisfaction."

Another major boost comes in May-June when a new comprehensive stock condition survey of all our properties is completed.

Read more here, or go to www.originhousing.org.uk/latest-news.aspx

Into work

Improving quality-of-life for residents is an important element of Origin's work. A key part of this is providing employment and training opportunities in partnership with other agencies and groups.

Training resident housing inspectors



Ndidi Obi (left) received funding to train as a Resident Quality Inspector

on a 15 week course accredited by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and run by Origin and four north

London housing partners. Ndidi gained a level 2 Certificate in Housing with distinction and is now able to carry out inspections of estates, communal areas, voids, repairs, gas maintenance and other service areas.

Teaching construction skills

More job opportunities are available to residents now Origin has joined Notting Hill's north London Construction Training Initiative (CTI). The course teaches building trades to over 18-year olds, gives them a chance to get qualifications and gain placements on construction sites. In 2010/11 112 placements were made through CTI.

Thumbs up from service assessor



Origin has retained its certified status with Quality Housing Services,

an independent organisation that reviews our customer-facing services annually. We improved on our 09-10 performance in nine of the 10 areas assessed. Our highest scores were for: Opening and Reception;

Telephone Accessibility; Rent Payment and Collection.

The assessment was the result of an onsite audit by inspectors, mystery shoppers and customer polling. The auditor said that he was made to feel very welcome and was impressed by the enthusiasm of the staff he met.

Home From Hospital scheme saves NHS £3m

In six years Origin's 'Homes From Hospital' partnership with the NHS and Islington council has freed-up

over 451 hospital beds early and saved the NHS more than £3 million.

The anti-bed-blocking initiative has now been

introduced in Camden. Home From Hospital offers extra support to vulnerable, elderly patients as they make the transition from hospital to home. The most common form of help is 'blitz cleaning' and clearing clutter from patients' homes. Other help includes adaptations, such as

converting a bath into a walk-in shower, buying new beds, or getting the central heating going.

One patient said: "The house had been empty for so long that I wouldn't have been able to come home without the help I got. Now I'm home everything is fine and I'm enjoying life again."

Bold stock transfer moves Origin closer to customers

In the last year a significant 12% of housing stock has been either transferred through sale or management transfer to other more local responsible social landlords. This is allowing Origin to align closer to residents and stakeholders in north London and Hertfordshire, so we can improve customer service and build stronger local partnerships.

Ten per cent has been sold and we transferred the management of the remainder. The housing was a mixture of general needs, retirement housing and leasehold accommodation in nine local authority areas in south west

London, Surrey, Kent, Cambridgeshire and Essex.

Origin now concentrates its housing, care and support services in 14 local authority areas. Chief Executive Karen Wilson said: "We have made one of the biggest recent % transfers in the sector and this streamlining has already helped make our services more efficient and given us a stronger community focus."

The transfer is part of a wider consolidation by Origin into one organisation. Last April SPH Housing, Griffin Homes and other parts of the previous Origin 'Group' became one organisation.

Victorian mansion blocks transformed to 'Decent Homes plus'



Eighty four draughty and leaking Victorian mansion block apartments in Holborn, central London, have been future-proofed without sacrificing their unique period character.

Manager of the four year £12 million project, Alice Spanton, said: "Investing heavily now will save us money and hopefully allow us to avoid major works for the next 25 years."

Origin took a sensitive, painstaking approach to renovation, preserving original terrazzo tiles, marble, ornate fireplaces and ornamental stonework. Wherever possible floorboards, doors and other period features were restored and given a new lease of life.

The blocks were brought into the 21st century with digital, satellite and broadband access points in every apartment, security features, central boiler plants, complete rewiring and reroofing, plus new bathrooms and kitchens throughout.

Bronze awards for Enfield boys



Origin believes that creating opportunities for young people makes for stronger communities for our residents. Football is one of the best ways to achieve this. In Enfield two young footballers not only set up their own team, but went on to win bronze level Duke of Edinburgh awards.

A few months ago Mohammed Osman, Faysal Osman and their mates were hanging around Dalrymple Close playing

football on the street. Origin's Community Development team's Joned Khan and Kieran Bryant persuaded the boys to set up a football team and get involved in the Duke of Edinburgh awards. This is part of Origin's Football Foundation-sponsored '4 Kix' programme, which encourages Enfield and Camden football team members to develop their personal and team skills as well as helping their communities.

Pupils' letters help extend coaching at school



Extra funding was found by Origin to keep football coaching at a Camden school after 25 pupils wrote letters.

The sessions at St Michael's were due to finish at the end of February, but as a result of the letters, the coaches will stay until the end of the summer term. The coaches, Michael Johnson and Lorenz Ferrari, are products of the Origin FC youth team and Origin's training/further education programme.

A pupil wrote: "Imagine a playground with balls flying in your face and lots of arguments. When we have Michael and Lorenz in our playground, it makes it better and changes sad faces into happy faces. Please let us keep them as our football coaches."

St Michael's headteacher Bruce Russell said: "There has been a sharp decline in playground incidents since the Origin coaches came to St Michael's."

Perception survey completed

Thanks to everyone who responded to Origin's perception survey late last year. We gained a lot of valuable information. As a consequence of your feedback we:

- have revamped our stakeholder news and are distributing it electronically. This is the first one;
- are providing more targeted information especially at a local authority level to specific stakeholder groups;
- are tracking our response to enquiries to ensure they meet our 10 days target;
- are addressing the low level of awareness amongst stakeholders of our broader work with communities;
- are inviting local councillors to events and meetings to build better local links.

Time Bank works for hard-to-reach community groups



More than 300 people in Camden have gained skills and stronger community ties through Origin's three-year Time Banking project.

Sponsored by bank Santander, more than 200 adults and young people have taken part in this time and talent sharing scheme, and a further 127 have learnt skills that could potentially help them get work, such as courses in food-and-hygiene, gardening, massage, and jewellery making. More than 12 groups have been set up to support these individual efforts, including a gardening group, creative writing group and coffee mornings.

Time Bank has appealed to those not usually involved in community activities, such as the homeless, certain black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, the elderly and those with learning disabilities.

For example:

- Homeless volunteer Paddy McMillan earned a whopping 51 time credits over a period of four months by cooking, recycling and helping with security at a local festival. He used his time credits for driving lessons.
- Elderly gardener Violet Clarkson at Robert Morton retirement housing scheme has been helped with planting bulbs and gardening by tenants from learning disability scheme Old Church Court.

Many thanks to builder Galliford Try, who is funding an expanded Time Bank for another year.

Read more here, or go to www.originhousing.org.uk/latest-news.aspx

Youths win grant three times bigger than asked



The application to the Youth Opportunities Fund by Enfield young people for activity equipment was so good they got £4,500 instead of the requested £1,000!

Community Development officers Sev Bayram and Joned Khan helped the youngsters with their application. One excerpt read: "we feel really strongly about getting a youth club because it will help us get in less trouble with adults and the elderly."

Please tell us what you think of this newsletter.

Email peter.taylor@originhousing.org.uk.